

Lesson # 30 The 3rd Trumpet Judgment

Revelation 8: 10-11

Date: February 6, 2011

Revelation 8:10-11 (ESV)

¹⁰The third angel blew his trumpet, and a great star fell from heaven, blazing like a torch, and it fell on a third of the rivers and on the springs of water. ¹¹The name of the star is Wormwood. A third of the waters became wormwood, and many people died from the water, because it had been made bitter.

I. A Great Star**v. 10**

The world has long been fascinated by the lights in the heavens and every couple in love gazing into the night sky hopes to witness a shooting star or meteor flashing across the sky in a blaze of fire. As movie making has evolved and technical skills have increased, the theme for a number of very believable & realistic disaster films has been the potential for a comet, meteorite or asteroid strike on earth which will decimate the planet and change life on earth foreverⁱ. Of course, in such movies, mankind is such intellect and ingenuity that he can detect the inbound objects long before their arrival and make plans to rendezvous with the object via spacecraft & attempt to blow it up with nuclear weapons, and also save some people and supplies underground in case their space efforts fail. There have also been a number of scary moments as space junk such as old satellites (or things like Skylab) or rocket parts have come out of orbit and crashed to earth. Satellites can weigh 100 tons! ①

This world and our moon have sustained meteorite strikes (which are much more visually obvious on the moon) over the thousands of years since creation, and scientists often theorize that a huge meteorite collision with earth caused the demise of the dinosaurs “millions of years” ago. Modern astronomers actually track the movement of asteroids, meteors and space debris. Ones that are large enough are charted and calculations are made to determine when and if they might cross earth’s path. There have been some close calls too – very large asteroids have passed within 268,000 miles of earth, moving at over 10 miles /second – one in July of 2006 was over a half mile in diameter. On April 13, 2029, asteroid 99942 Apophus will pass within 20,000 miles of earth and will be visible to the naked eye.

According to Universe Today’s websiteⁱⁱ, NASA catalogs all “Near Earth Asteroids” that are larger than 1 km in diameter. They have found over 1,000 of these, and the impact of one of these hitting the earth would be disastrous.

At some point in the future, whether by an asteroid being tracked now, or by one as yet unnoticed, earth will be struck by “something like a great mountain” (Rev. 8:8) followed by this disastrous visitor from space. Whereas the first one hit the

sea and affected the oceans, this one will affect the unsalted waters like rivers, streams, lakes and springs. This 'star' may follow the first one in very quick succession, perhaps mere days afterwards.

Whereas the first atmospheric intruder was said to be "like a mountain burning with fire" this one is called a "great star" and it falls from heaven "blazing like a torch", so we have some interpretive work to do. First of all, is this a real "star" like our sun? We have to immediately say no, because our own sun is still there after this and will play a role in a later judgment, but if another star like our sun (even a smaller one) were to strike earth, earth would be consumed. So it is not technically what we call a star.

Well, could it be Satan? Doesn't Jesus say in Luke 10:18 – "*I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven*"? And how about Rev. 12:3-4a? *³And another sign appeared in heaven: behold, a great red dragon, with seven heads and ten horns, and on his heads seven diadems. ⁴His tail swept down a third of the stars of heaven and cast them to the earth.*

Could Satan be the thing that John sees blazing like a torch along with his demons? After all, angelic beings are sometimes called stars and these 'stars' are moving like lightning to earth, and in order to affect all the fresh water on earth, obviously more than one area is being struck by this star.

However, the context and language here makes this unlikely. The text says "it" not "he" fell, and one strike on earth with the correct chemical composition and dispersion due to impact could drift as a world covering cloud to poison a 1/3rd of the waters. Ancient usage of the word translated "torch" here often denoted a meteor streaking through the air, and it makes the most sense to see this as a literal meteorite or asteroid, or better, a comet hitting earth or traveling through the atmosphere. Scientists believe comets are more vaporous than solid. They have a solid core but the visible tail and ghostly hue are made up of debris like water crystals or similar gaseous or frozen compounds. ②

"It fell on a third of the rivers and the springs" could mean it does not wholly strike earth, but perhaps breaks up in the atmosphere, dropping remnants to earth which end up in the water system in the vicinity of where it hits. We have seen what can happen when pollution gets into the water table, and now this could be even more of a disaster, because the source is other worldly and more widespread. Besides, who really knows what unknown chemicals, compounds or elements are to be found outside of our planet? Remember the concerns after the first moon walking events? The astronauts were held in quarantine for a while to make sure they had not brought back some alien (and thus incurable) disease or microbe from the moon.

Notice again, that the judgment is mathematically precise and controlled, again, 1/3rd - fulfilling God's purpose and plan. We know this because He has recorded it for us here before it occurs.

II. Wormwood

v.11

This 'star' has a name or perhaps characteristic, "Wormwood", in the Greek, "*Apsinthos*". This word is not found anywhere else in the Greek bible or NT, but there are plants native to the middle east called "wormwood", and are very bitter tasting.

In the OT, (Jer. 9:15; 23:15; Lam. 3:15,19) wormwood was a symbol for divine punishmentⁱⁱⁱ. In itself, it is not poisonous, but some poison-like effects are associated with it in Jer. 23:15.

Verse 11 tells us that many people died as a result of the water because it had been made bitter. That could mean that it tasted so bad that no one could drink it, or that it actually killed those who drank it. It does not say that 1/3rd of the people died (as it will in Rev, 9:18 – the 6th Trumpet), only that many died. There may be some who drink the water that do not die – remember that 2/3^{rds} of the fresh water is not affected.

We don't know the geography involved in this judgment. Is it worldwide or limited to one continent? The text does not tell us. The death here is incidental, because the purpose of this judgment is to punish, not kill. It is the removal of an absolute necessity for living to bring people to the realization that the things they take for granted can be removed in a second. God is leaving room for repentance. Cf. **II Peter 3:1-9**.

③

Remember that any one of the judgments we have seen since the second seal was opened could have been intensified enough to destroy earth and its' inhabitants completely, and relatively quickly. God is taking seven years, predicted years, to bring about judgment and finality of His purposes for having created the universe. Just as He could have taken Israel out of Egypt with a word, or by putting benevolence into Pharaoh's heart rather than hardness, He bombarded Egypt with 1 series of 10 plagues, and His purpose, which we looked at a few weeks ago was so that His name might be made known, so that people would know that He is the Lord of the whole earth. This is no different, except that it is cosmic, global in its' scope, and it opens the door to the Kingdom and then the eternal state.

Next lesson – Lesson # 31 The Fourth Trumpet & an Eagle Evangelist - Rev. 8:12-13

ⁱ For example, "Deep Impact", "Armageddon"

ⁱⁱ Universe Today – universetoday.com – accessed 9/11/10

ⁱⁱⁱ Robert Thomas, Revelation 8-22, p. 21